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ABSTRACT

An overview of Career Resource Centers (CRCs) is presented. CRCs are described as places where students can go to find career information, find a summer job, or take a vocational interest inventory; where teachers can go to find career education materials or to arrange a field trip; or where guidance counselors can go to hold group sessions, simulate job interviews, or conduct individual vocational counseling. Topics covered in this fact sheet include: (1) the purposes of CRCs; (2) initial planning steps; (3) staffing needs; (4) facility design and placement considerations; (5) instructional media requirements accompanied by a list of 12 directories of free and inexpensive materials; and (6) questions to consider in nine categories when formulating an evaluation plan. A bibliography of two references and eight additional resources, most of which are available from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) system, is provided. (DC)

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Career Resource Center.
OVERVIEW: ERIC Fact Sheet No. 7.

by

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OVERVIEW

FACT SHEET No. 7
Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

CAREER RESOURCE CENTER

This Fact Sheet gives a basic *overview* of Career Resource Centers (CRCs). It is designed to help increase your understanding of Career Resource Centers, including what they are and what programs and services they offer. In addition, resources, principally from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) system, have been listed. These resources provide more complete information to help you plan, implement, and evaluate a Career Resource Center in your school or community.

Although Career Resource Centers are often found outside educational settings, this Fact Sheet will discuss the CRC in the school environment. However, keep in mind that these resources and guidelines can also be helpful in designing CRCs for private and public agencies that serve adults and out-of-school youth.

WHAT IS A CAREER RESOURCE CENTER?

Where can students go to find relevant, up-to-date information on careers, to find a summer job, or to take a vocational interest inventory? Where can teachers go to find career education materials for their classrooms or to arrange a field trip for their students? Where can guidance counselors go to hold group counseling sessions, simulate job interviews, or conduct individual vocational counseling? The answer to all these questions is, to a Career Resources Center (CRC). In recent years, the CRC phenomenon has been stimulated by the diverse needs of comprehensive career guidance programs and the desire to consolidate career education resources within a school system.

CRCs come in many shapes and sizes. They may be found in the corner of a library or media center, adjacent to or within the guidance offices, or in their own separate rooms. Some even occupy their own building. Wherever it is, the CRC is recognized as the central location where a wide variety of career education resources are housed and where numerous career/vocational counseling activities take place.

Most sources agree that the major purposes of Career Resource Centers should be to—

- provide up-to-date occupational, educational, and personal-social information;
- help individuals use resources to achieve their goals;
- promote thoughtful career planning and decision making;
- assist individuals in assessing and understanding their personal attitudes, values, interests, and aptitudes;
- foster the integration of career development activities into classroom instruction;
- provide a delivery system for career counseling services;
- prepare individuals for life-role transitions;
- provide a setting where individuals can feel comfortable in sharing their interests and concerns in a nonthreatening environment.

DEVELOPING A CAREER RESOURCE CENTER: WHERE DO YOU START?

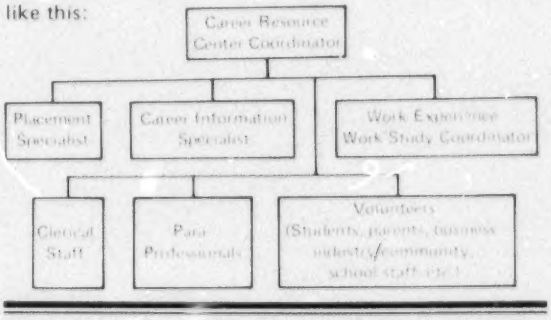
Planning is a crucial stage in any operation. The initial steps to be taken in planning a CRC should include—

- designating an individual or individuals to coordinate the planning effort;
- identifying student/client needs;
- securing administrative support;
- ensuring coordination with existing programs and services;
- establishing an advisory committee;
- preparing a written plan or proposal;
- obtaining financial support;
- encouraging broad-based community and staff support.

Once the plan has been finalized, you are ready to start implementation.

STAFFING THE CENTER

Ideally, the CRC should be staffed with a highly diversified group of professionals, paraprofessionals, and clerical individuals. The ideal staffing plan could look something like this:



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Realistically, however, many CRCs depend upon one full-time counselor/administrator, a paraprofessional and/or secretary, and a host of part-time help from available school staff members. Financial resources and local conditions will determine the numbers of full-time and part-time staff available and the way in which duties and responsibilities are distributed and supervised. These duties and responsibilities are governed by the basic structure and size of the CRC, types of programs planned, staff competencies, and material resources. Overall, staffing should be arranged to meet the following basic functions of a CRC:

- The collection, analysis, and storage of career information and materials
- Retrieval and dissemination of career information and materials
- Counseling and personal assessment
- Placement services
- Work-study coordinator
- Curriculum development
- Teacher resource coordinator
- Community resource development and coordination

Due to economic considerations and the realization that trained paraprofessionals can assume many of the duties normally assigned to professional staff, paraprofessionals have become key people in the operation of some CRCs. With this increased demand for trained paraprofessional help, the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences have developed modules designed to train CRC technicians in such activities as interviewing, holding group orientations, scheduling events, and selecting resources.

WHAT KIND OF FACILITY IS NEEDED?

The size of the population served and the scope of the program and services offered will determine many aspects of the facility. If no space in the existing building(s) is available, you might want to consider a mobile unit.

But whatever the form, when selecting or planning a space for the CRC, keep in mind the following points:

- It is important to be near the main flow of traffic and highly visible.
- CRCs adjacent to the guidance offices are often desirable for easier counselor interaction.
- Accessibility to the handicapped should not be overlooked.
- Convenience for teacher use is also desirable.
- Flexibility in the floor plan and overall organization is a must.
- There should be a variety of work stations to accommodate individual study and group activities.
- Localized lighting, convenient electrical outlets, and attractive display areas are all important.
- Finally, there should be office space for the career counselor and/or paraprofessional.

RESOURCES

Instructional media for a CRC will fall into three categories: printed materials, audiovisual presentations, and mechanical or systems approaches. Printed materials are easily obtained and are relatively inexpensive. They form the backbone of most career resource centers. Sources of printed career information include career-related books from commercial publishers, a variety of periodicals and newspapers, and brochures and pamphlets disseminated (sometimes free of charge) by professional associations, labor organizations, business/industry associations, and governmental agencies.

Meerbach (1978) recommends including, along with printed materials, a substantial number of audiovisual products in a CRC for several reasons:

- Such materials are a highly effective means of communicating attitudinal and cognitive concepts.
- They are natural starting points with students that have reading difficulties.
- They are an effective and appealing mode of providing insights into lifestyles and personal factors associated with occupations.
- They are excellent motivators for discussion groups and for developing further information-seeking behavior.

Commercial publishers produce occupational and career development information in a wide variety of forms, including films, filmstrips, slide/tape presentations, audiocassettes, and videocassettes. Many schools have been highly successful in producing their own audiovisual presentations tailored to local or regional career opportunities.

Career information delivered through mechanical and systems approaches, such as microfilm or computer-based systems, has grown tremendously in amount and become increasingly innovative in the last decade. Even though the costs of such systems are greater due to the hardware necessary, the advantages are numerous, such as speed of information retrieval, ease of updating, and quantity of information available. In addition, the hardware and individual manipulation involved in these approaches seem to encourage students to explore career possibilities further.

Several of the bibliographic sources listed at the end of this Fact Sheet suggest specific and generic career-related materials and equipment appropriate for a CRC. There are, however, a number of directories on the market that describe free or inexpensive materials. Below is a partial listing:

- *Career Guidance: A Handbook of Methods*, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., Columbus, Ohio 43210 (1973)
- *Career Guidance Resources: A Handbook of Resource Abstracts–Grades K-14*, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education,

National Center Publications, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210

- *Career Index*, Chronicle Guidance Publications, Inc., Moravia, New York 13118
- *Dealing in Futures: Career Education Materials for Students*, USED Publication, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (1977)
- *Educators Guide to Free Materials*, Educators Progress Service, Randolph, Wisconsin 53956
- *EPIE Career Education Set: Volume 1—How to Select and Evaluate Instructional Materials; Volume 2—Analyses of Seven Hundred Prescreened Materials*, EPIE Institute, 463 West Street, New York, New York 10014 (1975)
- *The Multi-Media Catalog: Books, Periodicals, Films, and Cassettes*, American Personnel and Guidance Association, 1607 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009
- *NVGA Bibliography of Current Career Information*, Publication Sales, American Personnel and Guidance Association, 1607 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009
- *Occupational Literature: An Annotated Bibliography*, H. W. Wilson Company, 950 University Avenue, Bronx, New York 10452
- *Publications Catalog*, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, National Center Publications, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210
- *Resources for Career Development: An Annotated Bibliography*, Indiana Career Resource Center, 12019-09 South Greenlawn Avenue, South Bend, Indiana 46615 (1975)
- *A Starter File of Free Occupational Literature*, B'nai B'rith Vocational Service, 1640 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007

HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR CAREER RESOURCE CENTER?

To continue meeting the needs of those who use the CRC and to continue improving the services offered, it is necessary to evaluate each aspect of the center's operation.

In the handbook *Career Resource Centers* (Axelrod et al. 1977) the authors suggest the following components and questions to be considered in formulating the evaluation plan:

Facilities
- Are the environmental conditions (room temperature, ventilation, seating arrangements) favorable to promoting good learning?

Personnel
- Is the center adequately staffed to meet client needs?
- How helpful are center staff in assisting clients?
- Is staff time allocated so that services can be provided in an effective and efficient way?

Materials
- Does the center contain a variety of career information resources?
- What materials are used most frequently by center clients?
- How many career materials does the center contain?
- Are the materials readily accessible by clients?

Equipment
- What types of equipment does the center have?
- Is there sufficient equipment to meet client demands?
- Is the equipment in good working order?
- What equipment is most/least often used?

Programs and Activities
- What programs, services, and/or activities do center clients find most useful?
- How many and what types of programs, services, and activities were initiated by the center?
- How were the programs and activities received by target audiences?

Center Use
- How many clients visited the career resource center?
- How many clients visited the center more than once—how often?
- How many center services were performed outside the center facility?
- What proportion of the population for whom the center is designated utilized the center?

Impact on Users
- What client-centered objectives were met through career resource center utilization?
- Were the client's career development awareness and skills increased?
- Have more teachers incorporated career development activities or information into their instruction as a result of the career resource center?

Funds
- Are the funds available used in a cost-effective manner?
- Are the funds sufficient for effective delivery of needed services?

Community Awareness and Support
- What is the level of community awareness of the center's objectives, activities, and availability?
- Is there general support by community leadership for the operation of the center?

WHERE CAN YOU FIND FURTHER INFORMATION?

This Fact Sheet has provided a basic overview of career resource centers. Most of the information was taken from the handbook *Career Resource Centers*, by Axelrod et al. (1977). If you want more comprehensive information to help you develop a CRC or improve an existing one, this handbook and several other resources are listed below. Materials included in the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) collection may be found by using the ED numbers indicated in the resource listing. Furthermore, you can always find additional and related information from documents contained in the ERIC system under the following index terms (ERIC descriptors). The terms most directly related to the subject of this Overview are indicated by boldface.

Career Development	**Occupational Information**
Career Education	Planning
Career Information Systems	Professional Development
Community Resources	Program Design
Counselor Role	Program Development
Educational Resources	**Resource Centers**
Facility Planning	**Resource Materials**
Guidance Personnel	**Resource Room Programs**
Information Centers	**Vocational Counseling**
Information Sources	
Library Material Selection	

If you need additional help in finding these materials, contact the user services coordinator, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210 (800-848-4815 toll free outside Ohio, or 614-486-3655. Cable CTVOCEDOSU/Columbus, Ohio).

Materials published by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education may be purchased from National Center Publications, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

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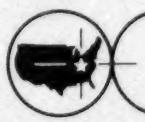

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